

Town Administrator Report

January 19, 2023

Introductory Meetings

I continue to schedule introductory meetings. Since the last Board meeting, I've met with the Chair of the Advisory Board, Chair of the Recreation Commission, IT consultants, Executive Director of NMCOG, and the School Superintendent and Business Manager. We also had our first department head staff meeting since I started.

Budget and Capital Requests Update

Budget and capital request worksheets have been sent and they are due on Monday, January 23. This week, I plan to schedule individual departmental budget meetings for the week of January 23 to begin reviewing submittals.

Annual Town Report

Town Report requests also were sent last week. We are asking all submittals for the Annual Town Report to be received by Friday, February 3.

IT Meeting and Requests

I had a meeting with our IT vendor on Wednesday and, in advance, requested feedback from staff on their department needs. I'm also working to review the camera set-up in the meeting room to determine how to properly use it. The largest obstacle at the moment is gaining access to the laptop. They set up a workstation for the new Executive Assistant and modified mine, slightly. We spoke about the possibility of doing an inventory/assessment of our hardware, upgrading software, cybersecurity measures, etc.

Affordable Housing Committee – RFP Process Update

The Affordable Housing Committee is meeting on Thursday, January 26 at 6 PM to interview two respondents to the RFP issued for the property at 160-164 Pleasant Street. The Committee has requested me to invite the Board of Selectmen to attend. If a quorum plans to attend, and participate, we can post the meeting.

Union Building Rehabilitation Committee

We have received several interested candidates to serve on the Committee. They are as follows:

Brian Flynn (Licensed Plumber and MA Construction Supervisor)

Henry Fontaine (Building Inspector)

Alan Chaney (Conservation Commission, Planning Board, Town Forest Committee, CPC)

Bonnie Ricardelli (former Treasurer/Collector)

As a reminder, the Committee is to be comprised of a total of seven members: one member of the Board of Selectmen, one representative from the GDRSD, one individual who has experience in residential or commercial development, one member with a background in banking and/or finance, and three members of the community at-large.

Various Resident Issues

Dave Kimpton

Mr. Kimpton visited the office yesterday requesting the removal of a utility pole from the corner of Pond and Pleasant Street, at Woodward's Mill Pond. He explained that there are no wires or power on the pole at the present time. He also added that some time ago the pole had a light on it used to light up the pond while being used for ice skating. Since this land is conservation area, I ran it by both Carol and Alan and neither had any issues with its removal. I intend to reach out to National Grid to initiate the process of removing the pole. If you have any concerns with this, please let me know.

Brian Locapo, Park Commission

Mr. Locapo stopped by the office regarding the regulation of dogs at Larter Park. He mentioned that there was a bylaw requiring owners to have control of their dogs via command or leash, but not requiring a leash on public property. He would like to know the process to require dogs on a leash at Larter Park which is under their care, custody, and control, as I understand it. The Park Commission has the authority to enact use regulations on property under their control (I quickly ran this my counsel). I notified Brian that they are able to regulate the use of their property independently which would include requiring dogs on a leash at Larter Park.

Jean Primeau

Ms. Primeau called the office to discuss the increase in electricity rates. I explained to her that this issue appeared on the Board's agenda last week and I was instructed to research programs that may help reduce the large spike in electricity rates. I told her I had looked at the Westford municipal aggregation program and reached out to the consultant who helped them put the program together, and I'm waiting to hear back from them. I told her I would be in touch or she should feel free to reach out again in a couple of weeks for an update.

Brian Flynn

Mr. Flynn visited the office to discuss the speed limit on Route 113 and believes it should be more consistent and we should look at reducing it. As I understand the process, since it is a state numbered route, we would need to reach out to MassDOT and request they conduct a speed study to start this process. Mr. Flynn also discussed this issue with the Police Chief. Mr. Flynn requested a petition to put an article on the warrant in this regard, as well.

Bandstand Earmark

In the Economic Development bill, \$75,000 was earmarked for repairs of the bandstand on the Common. I have initiated the process to access the funds and I am now waiting to hear back from them which I expect to happen soon.

Deputy Collector and Vadar

As part of transitioning from Point to Vadar, we are also moving the Deputy Collector function from Point to Kelly and Ryan. Kelly and Ryan has history of working well with Vadar, and also offers an added benefit of printing and mailing town real estate tax and excise bills. Currently, we prepare and mail property tax bills in-house which takes time and coordination. We are notifying Point of these changes this week and will then need to work with Point, Vadar, and Kelly and Ryan on the transition. For your information, we will need to secure our prior property tax and excise tax bill/payment history from Point which we expect to take a decent amount of time and energy.

Auditorium HVAC Unit

Representatives from MIIA have visited Town Hall to assess and evaluate the HVAC system, and damage caused by its condition. They offered temporary heat for the auditorium which is in process. They are currently scoping the repair/replacement work for MIIA.

Town Election Results: Update

On Tuesday night, the Special Committee of the House of Representatives declared Margaret Scarsdale the winner in the 1st Middlesex District. Representative Scarsdale was sworn in by Gov. Healey on Wednesday.